



DIVORCE PROCESS OPTIONS

- **Self-Representation/Pro Se***

Self-represented parties do not hire lawyers. The parties must make decisions, draft and file all the required legal documents and financial disclosures on their own. Navigating the divorce process without any legal input can result in mistakes and uninformed decisions, court rejection of an agreement, or future disputes and returns to court.

- **Limited Scope Representation/Consulting legal services**

LSR/Consulting is an option for a party to hire a lawyer to provide advice, document review, drafting, or other specified services. This allows a party to pay only for limited legal assistance rather than full representation.

- **Mediation**

Mediation is a process in which parties hire a neutral lawyer who works with the couple jointly but does not represent or advocate for either party. The lawyer mediator educates the parties about the law, guides discussions to help them resolve issues, and drafts and files legal documents. The goal of mediation is to help parties reach durable agreements that meet the needs of the family. Mediation may include child and financial specialists if needed to assist the parties in making well-informed family and financial decisions.

- **Collaborative Practice**

Collaborative Practice is a process in which each party hires a lawyer and all four work together in a cooperative, non-adversarial, out-of-court process with a mutual goal of reaching an agreement. A team approach with direct client participation is used for educating, negotiating, and reaching agreements; the team may also include child or financial specialists. All commit not to go to court for decisions, and collaborative lawyers are disqualified from participating in contested court hearings.

- **Lawyer Negotiation/Litigation***

Lawyer Negotiation/Litigation is the traditional adversarial divorce process in which one or both parties hire an attorney who advocates for that client's positions. Attorneys negotiate, but if an agreement on all issues is not reached, the judge conducts a court trial and makes final decisions. Even though most litigated divorces are ultimately resolved by a settlement between the parties, it can be a lengthy process that is emotionally and financially expensive.

* If parents have disputes about custody/placement, they must participate in court-ordered mediation. If still no agreement, the court appoints a Guardian ad Litem (lawyer for best interests of the children).

For more information: www.familymediationcenter.org; (414) 939-6707